by Air India for the purpose. The Government later decided to have the process of disinvestment in HCI completed by the Ministry of Disinvestment Financial bids were invited from the bidders for HCI properties (other than Centaur Lake View, Srinagar) and after scrutiny & examination, the Government has accepted the bids in respect of two hotels. The other properties (except Srinagar) for which either the bids were below reserve price or no bid was received, further action to re-invite bids would be taken in due course. Regarding Hotel Centaur Lake View, Srinagar, some issues are yet to be resolved with Government of Jammu & Kashmir.

Deaths due to smoking

*296. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN:—Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that more than three million people die every year in the country as a result of smoking tobacco and Supreme Court ban on public smoking is a welcome sign;

(b) how Government propose to implement this ban and whether the existing agencies suffice to enforce this ban or some specific task force is being created for effective implementation of ban and monitoring thereof; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.R THAKUR): (a) to (c) The Government considers smoking as one of the major public health hazards which is responsible directly or indirectly for substantial deaths in the country. As per the community-based survey in India, it is estimated that eight lakh deaths per year could be attributable to tobacco use. The Supreme Court, in its order passed on 2nd November, 2001 prohibited smoking in public places and issued directions to the Union of India, State Governments as well as the Union Territories to take effective steps to ensure prohibiting smoking in public places.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare issued letters to all the State Governments and Union Territories to give wide publicity to the orders of the Supreme Court and take steps to prohibit smoking in public places. An advertisement has also been issued in leading newspapers by the Government informing the general public of the orders of the Court. To discourage use of tobacco products, a comprehensive Bill, namely, " The Cigarettes and other

Tobacco products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production. Supply and Distribution). Bill, 2001 I has been introduced in the Rajya Sabhaon 7th March, 2(X)I. This Bill provides for prohibiting smoking in public places and contains penal provisions for its violation.

Treatment of diseases by ayurvedic medicines

*297. SHRI RAJU PARMAR.

SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that diseases like arthritis, slip disc, spondylitis, asthma, sinusitis and migraine can be cured by ayurvedic medicines;

(b) whether the success rate of curing these diseases is between 70 and 80 per cent according to the surveys conducted by experts;

(c) if so, the steps Government arc contemplating to increase the number of hospitals and dispensaries in the country to cure the above diseases at a reasonable rales;

(d) whether Government propose to open Research and Development Centres also for procuring and testing of herbs; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR): (a) Medicines are available in Ayurvedic System for the treatment and management of these indications.

(b) No survey has been commissioned by the Central Government for determining the success rate of these medicines.

(c) Health is a State subject and opening of new hospitals and dispensaries falls under the purview of the concerned State Government. However, Government is encouraging the Stales to increase availability of ISM drugs in the State run hospitals and dispensaries.

(d) and (e) The Government is providing financial assistance for upgradation of the State Drug Testing Laboratories and Pharmacies to enforce quality control of ISM&H drugs and augment production of standard drugs.